

Chapter 8.
URBAN AND RURAL FAMILIES IN THE LATE 18TH
CENTURY SAINT PETERSBURG PROVINCE
ACCORDING TO THE 5TH TAX REVISION
(REVIZSKYE SKAZKI)

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Introduction

Family and other population history studies based on microdata is a rapidly developing strain in modern Russian historiography. Thus, the second half of the 20th to the beginning of the 21st centuries are characterized by active use of primary, individual level demographic data on the Russian population (Ulyanova, Troitskaya). In most cases Russian scholars have analyzed rural populations, peasants in particular, and only a few studies consider urban populations or the clergy (Avdeev, Troitskaya, Ulyanova; Postnikov). Our research is based on the revizskie skazki and focuses on a comparative analysis of demographic trends in different social groups registered in the late 18th century Saint Petersburg province: merchants and low-middle class city dwellers and peasants: privately owned serfs and those who belonged to the Tsars' family.

Revizskie skazki (hereafter referred as revisions) were originally fiscal registers designed to list all persons who were subjects to taxation. Peter the Great introduced the system in 1718 and there were ten such revisions run in 1719, 1745, 1763, 1782, 1795, 1811, 1815, 1843, 1850 and 1858 before the abolition of serfdom in 1861¹. Due their cross-sectional nature, we can classify them as census-like, but they were not only kept for statistical purposes. In Saint Petersburg province, the revisions are well preserved and researchers have at their disposal significant amounts of information dating from the 18th and 19th centuries covering large areas. Of course, the 19th century manuscripts are preserved better than the 18th century primary data. For example, only a small number of documents remain from the fourth revision run in the 1780s. However, we found representative amount of the fifth revision's primary data from 1795. Most of the revision lists used in this study are

¹ For more information on Revizskie skazki see Troitskaya, 1995.

kept in the two central Russian archives: Tsetnral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv v Sankt Peterburge (Central State Historical Archive in Saint Petersburg) (hereafter TsGIA) and Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive) (hereafter RGIA). The revision lists included data on various social groups of the Russian capital's population and its neighboring city Sofia with merchants, artisans, house serfs, foreigners, etc, as well as various categories of peasants, priests, clerks and German colonists.

The source basis

For this study, we used revision lists with data on Saint Petersburg and Sofia merchants and lower-middle class residents, as well as lists with data on serf-peasants and peasants belonging to the Tsars' family.

Merchants and lower middle class residents

Revision lists about Saint Petersburg merchants and lower-middle class families are kept in TsGIA's collection 221 (Petrograd Merchant Board) in Saint Petersburg) (TsGIA. F. 221. Op.1. D. 169). The collection contains revision lists about the tax-paying population of the capital between 1740s and the 1830s.

Revision lists about Sofia merchants and lower-middle class families are kept in RGIA's collection 488 (Tsarskoye Selo Town Hall) (RGIA. F. 488. Op.1. D. 451, 469a, 469b). It should be noted, that this collection also contains lists from Gatchina and Pavlovsk estates.

Peasants

1. Revision lists about the Saint Petersburg province peasant population are stored in a number of collections in central and regional archives. Revision lists on the Tsars family peasants we found in RGIA's collection 487 (Tsarskoye Selo Palace Administration) (RGIA. F. 487. Op.9. D.901).

2. Revision lists with data on the serf-peasants are preserved partly in TsGIA's collection 479 (Petrograd Treasury Chamber) (TsGIA. F. 479. Op.23. D.132).

The revision lists are organized by "domokhozyaystvo", a term which can be translated as "household". They contain information on the head of the household or family and then about all its members and how they relate to the head (wife, son, daughter etc).

The revision also provides data on age, occupation and marital status of the persons listed, including women (Kashchenko, Markova, 103; Matison, 134). They may occasionally contain information about a couple's previous marital status when applicable, place of residence and premarital social status, as well as the time of the marriage. For example the Runovskaya farm's revision list had such information registered in a separate column entitled 'A imen-no' (namely). One household head had the wife Kristina, daughter of peasant Davyd Davydov. This tax payer had married her in 1788 in the village where she lived. During the fourth revision in 1768 she was registered as eloped; but in 1795 she was back (TsGIA. F. 479. Op.23. D.132. L.200vv.)

Information on the female relatives (daughters, nieces) who had married and left the family during the inter census period, can be found in the separate column "These have left after the revision and are still absent for various reasons." This section often provides data on their marriage, residence and husband's social status.

The revision lists also contain information about the age of all family members, stated during a previous or the contemporary revision, or in both cases. This allows computing the average age at marriage as well as the average age difference of the spouses among the social groups in Saint Petersburg province for the entire 18th century. Even if affected by noted age heaping this information is of great value, for the vital event registers of the time did not provide information on the newlyweds' ages. It was only since 1838, due to the legal requirement, that priests started to register the brides' and grooms' ages.

However, the marriage date was not always stated in the documents; for example, there is no such information in the revision lists of the Sofia merchants and lower-middle class citizens. As a compensation, these documents provide information on social mobility, the ratio of first marriages and re-marriages, marital migration, as well as information on family's composition among various categories of the population.

Settlements chosen for analysis

This paper presents analyses of population in a few settlements with both rural and urban population elements. As examples of urban settlements we use Sankt-Petersburg and Sofia – a town located

near the Emperor's summer residence – Tsarskoye Selo some 23 km away from the capital at the time – Saint Petersburg. Empress Catherine the Great founded Sofia in 1780 with a plan to construct a modern European city with developed infrastructure, straight streets, water supply system, etc. Its first settlers were those employed at the Emperor's summer residence. In administrative terms Sofia used to be the center of a *uezd* – a sub province administrative unit, but eventually it also included the Emperors' residence Tsarskoye Selo.

Two settlements, Pulkovo and Podgornoye Pulkovo, were chosen to represent the rural population in this study. Both were located near the capital as well and populated by peasants belonging to the Tsars' family (Gleserov, 352). In addition, we analyzed the Taytskaya estate populated by serf-peasants privately owned by the noblemen Alexander Demidov (Aleksandrova, 266–286).

In sum, we have processed information on both urban population groups in Saint Petersburg province: 593 households with 1244 persons from Saint Petersburg itself and 474 households with 1187 persons from Sofia; and rural population groups: 159 peasant households with 1243 people owned by the Tsars' family and 173 serf-peasant households with 1251 people.

Family structure

The analysis of family structure among Saint Petersburg and Sofia artisans and merchants showed significant differences between the two cities. In Saint Petersburg, the percentage of single persons in the revision was very high: 51% of the total number of “families”; 37% were nuclear families; extended and multiple families were equal and made up 3% each. Lidia Semenova in her analyses of qualified workers (*masterovye*) employed in Sankt Petersburg military department also noted a high percentage of families (more than 30%) consisting of single men. It turned out that they were married but lived in Sankt Petersburg on their own while their family members lived elsewhere. For example in 1797, 36 of 51 qualified workers employed at the Okhtinskii factory in Sankt Petersburg had their wives and children staying in the countryside. Being peasants daughters, they had to live on the farm. Only 15 workers had their wives living together with them at the factory. A similar situation was observed while studying the revision lists of the workers employed at Saint Petersburg gun-

powder producing plant in 1798: half (33 of 65) of their wives lived in the countryside (Semenova, 177–179).

Most of Sofia's merchants and low-middle class citizens had nuclear families (56%); 37% consisted of single men; extended and multiple families made up 3% each like in Sankt Petersburg.

The rural families as defined in the relationship column turned out to be much bigger than the urban ones; however, the differences between the various strata of the peasant population were small. Peasant families belonging to the Tsars on average had 7.8 people; while serf-peasants families on average consisted of 7.2. That corresponds well with the Russian family size with 5–7 members on average throughout the 15th and early 19th centuries found by others (Aleksandrov, 57).

Multiple family households (see above) were the most common in rural areas; the proportion of such families in the Tsars' settlements was 51%, and in the serf-peasants villages – 50%. The proportion of nuclear families among the Tsars' peasants was 27%; and among privately owned serf-peasants – 30%. Only 13% of the Tsars' peasants and 10% of the serf-peasants had extended families; and families consisting of single person were rare in both cases – 8% (see figure1).

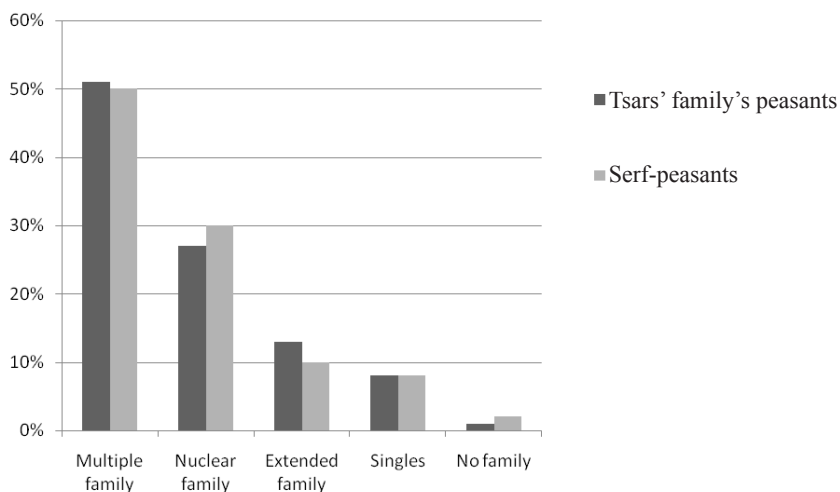


Figure 1. Distribution of peasant families by type

Migratory status of the urban population

The Empress wanted to build the city of Sophia as fast as possible, so she issued special decrees to employ people regardless of their social status. As a result, runaway serfs inhabited Sofia's outskirts (posad) and legalized their new status. Analysis of the revision data shows that 20% of Sofia's merchants and lower-middle class family heads (in total 99) registered in 1782 were former fugitives. Their former place of residence proves that the urban population growth between the Fourth and Fifth Revisions was due to in-migration. For example, only Sophia's 142 household heads were listed in both the 1782 and 1795 revisions, which composed only 38 % of its population. The vast majority had moved from a different place of origin to their present place of residence. Migrants from western provinces accounted for 3 %; northwestern (Novgorod, Pskov and Saint Petersburg) – 17%, central – 20% (mostly from Tver', Yaroslavl' and Moscow provinces); 22% – from northern (Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Olonets provinces) (See figure 2).

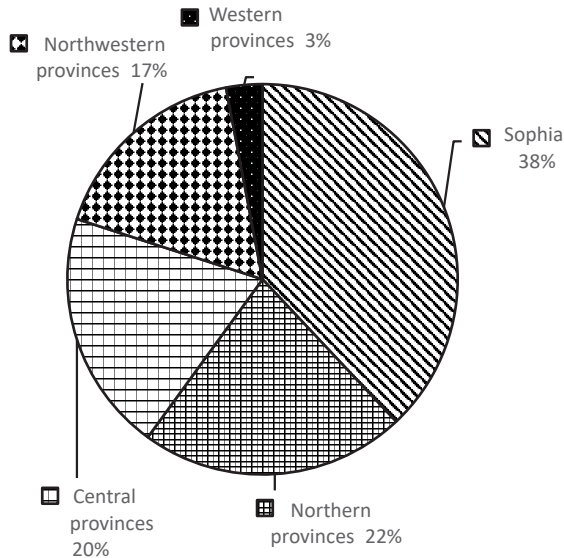


Figure 2. Sofia household's heads' previous places of residence

Basic parameters of marital behavior

Urban population

The intense migration processes that took place in Sophia between the fourth and fifth revisions affected the marriage behavior of its citizens. We have calculated the age difference of the spouses married in the 1780s and 1790s in Saint Petersburg and Sofia (152 and 252 couples respectively).

The analyses showed that the spouses' age at marriage was either similar or did not exceed 5 years (with older husbands) in 52% of all cases in Saint Petersburg and 41% in Sofia. Couples where husbands were ten or more years older than their wives, composed up to 15% of the total number of marriages in Saint Petersburg and more than 30% in Sofia. Merchants and lower-middle class men in the town likely did not want to start families too early, trying to settle into the new place. Active migration processes could have caused postponement of marriages by Sofia's grooms.

Sofia single men's ages indirectly support that assumption: about one third of them were 31 – 40 years old, and 28% belonged to the age group 41 to 50 years old. Among the single there were many who stated that they 'did not remember their parental origins' (*nepomnyashchiye rodstva*). One such person, a 44 years old Sofia's lower-middle class fellow, Ivan Fedorov, used to be a serf belonging to the landowner Ivan Andreev Yemelyanov who lived in the village of Vasil'kovo, Vologda province, wherefrom he run away and lived as a worker in Sofia. According to the revision in 1784, he was already registered as a settler on the Sofia outskirts (*Posad*). People like Ivan could not easily join the marriage market, having neither a clear status nor confidence. Most of Saint Petersburg's single men, on the contrary, were under 30 years old. Those between 11 and 20 made up 24% of all single men; and those 21 to 30 years old – 45%.

We have analyzed the age-difference between spouses in 135 couples married in the 1780s and the 1790s. In most cases (up to 70%) the spouses had almost the same age at marriage or one of the spouses was maximum five years older. Cases when the husband was 10 or more years older composed up to 7%; and those with a wife more than six years older than her husband composed only 2%.

Rural population

In most serf-peasants families both husband and wife belonged to the same landowner: such unions composed up to 88% in the settlements under consideration; every third union was concluded between fellow villagers. However, there were exceptions: we found sixteen cases when the Tsars' peasant brides married privately owned serf-peasants; and a soldier's daughter married a serf.

Couples who lived in Pulkovo and Podgornoye Pulkovo had similar marital behavior. Spouses in 76 of the 91 couples (84%) had married at the same age or one of them was up to five years older. There were only thirteen cases registered when the husband was more than six years older and only two cases when the wife was six or more years older.

Also, grooms from the Tsar settlements preferred marrying the same status brides (89%). Only four grooms married brides from the state-run village; another four married daughters of the privately owned serf-peasants; two married a soldier's daughter and a sailor's daughter.

Conclusion

Our study proved that most of the fifth revision primary lists are well preserved, which allowed analyses of family structure and main characteristics of marital behavior among selected urban and rural population groups in Saint Petersburg province in the 1780s and 1790s.

We found significant differences in family size and structure among the urban and rural population. Saint Petersburg merchants and lower-middle class had extremely high percentages of families composed of a single man, whose family members likely stayed in the villages. A majority of the neighboring Sofia town's merchants and lower-middle class had nuclear families.

Peasants in the rural areas of Sankt Petersburg province had big extended families: there were three times more family members than in the merchant and low-middle class families living in the cities. When comparing the two categories of peasants, serfs and those who belonged to the Tsars' family, we have not found much differences in family structure, size, or preferences in choosing a spouse.

Thus, the revisions have good informational potential for studying family and marriage behavior among different social groups and its dynamics in late 18th mid 19th centuries Russia.

Sources

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